



In the beginning

was the Word...

1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. 2 οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. 3 πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν.^α ὁ γέγονεν^α 4 ἐν¹ αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν², καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων· 5 καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

Every Christian a Missionary

Sermons Series and House Groups
Autumn 2013

based on John 1, and 14-16

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Note: the series is based on the John passages and is resourced by 'Every Christian a Missionary' by Paul Griffiths (copies available from Martin). The Colossians passage is a Pauline take on similar themes and hence may well be of value in preaching etc., but please keep the John passages as the main current, to keep continuity etc.

1. God is a Great Missionary

John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:1-8

God is a wonderful missionary

- heaven and earth speaks of His glory (Psalm 19; Jesus points to the flowers of the field etc.)
- He spoke to and through Israel
- supremely He has come amongst us in His Son Jesus Christ
- and we now share in His mission

The Mission is God's Mission, not ours - we share in His

Ours is to discern what God is doing and join in

He leads us into challenging situations, and we find God has already gone before us (*cp.* John the Baptist)

John 1: 1-14

God made everything we can see and all we cannot see through the Word. Because of his creation we can see just how great God is, therefore the created world speaks of his great work (Genesis 1). Psalm 19 is a great acclamation of the Glory of God. The Word is distinct from the Father but is God in the fullest sense.

The Greeks used "the Word" as a term for the spoken word but also the unspoken word, *the reason*. The Jews however used it as a way of referring to God. So John here is using a term that was meaningful to both Jew and Gentile. Life is Christ's gift and He illuminates the world. The light of Christ is the hope for mankind. John emphasizes that he is witness to the living God in Jesus so people are not to believe *in* him but *through* him to Jesus. John points the way to the one who comes from the Father, full of grace (meaning 'free gift') and truth. Here we have the fulfillment of prophesy as given to Israel (Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 53) and others (Micah 5:2-3) who know the Messiah is to come.

Many did not believe in Jesus but those who did, and do, are given the right to enter into God's family as the children of God (Verse 12).

With all the privileges we have in being children of God we as believers become the voice and herald of God. We are witnesses called to spread the Good News to those around us. We share in John's message of the Messiah's great commission to go into the world with our message of mercy and love. We are part of God purpose and He does not leave us, however difficult our task in the mission field may be.

Colossians 1:1-8

This passage speaks of the rapid spread of the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire within three decades of the day of Pentecost, emphasizing the worldwide nature of Christianity. The believers in Colossae are continuing to be made holy because of the Holy Spirit's work in their lives and are bearing fruit because of their faithfulness.

When you became a believer what did you feel about telling others of your new found faith?

How do you feel about it now?

How can we discern how, and where, we are to spread the Good News?

How does our personality help or hinder?

How do we react to peoples comments or outright opposition to our efforts?

2. Jesus Washes Our Feet

John 13:1-10;
Colossians 1:9-14

- the importance of ourselves knowing the personal touch of Jesus
- knowing we are loved (Jesus experienced this e.g. in John 12:1-3)
- knowing who we are in Christ
- motivated by love, not the desire to be loved

John 13: 1-10

On the evening of the Passover meal, Jesus does an astounding act of service love and love for his disciples. What were they to make of this? Some display concern, some question, some miss the point as did Peter who needed spiritual cleansing from sin, the same as people do today .

Washing was done sometime during the meal to emphasis the point, not at the start as was usual. A person in the Jewish tradition would bathe himself before going to a feast therefore only his feet would need washing. The disciples had been with Jesus for three years but did not have all the answers. A great encouragement for us.

God put everything in Jesus' power and control in fulfillment of God's plan (Hebrews 2:7-9). Jesus gave his disciples an example to follow (verse 15); a lesson in humility in selfless service. Jesus knew who He was, beloved of the Father, Saviour of the world but took on the nature of a slave. He showed them and us what the Father God is like. The disciple confused and alarmed but knew Jesus loved them deeper than any love they had known before. For our 21st century world the love of Jesus is the reality for which most people crave. To know we are loved deeply is the beginning of our love for others. It affects our daily lives and relationships in a profound way. But Verse 8 teaches that we must accept Jesus' spiritual washing to deal with our sins.

The importance for us is the personal touch of Jesus, to know him personally. Our God-given gifts are to be used to further His kingdom and to offer God's forgiveness to those who have failed. We

are to be adaptable in situations in which we find ourselves, to have a servant's heart, forgiving each other and living in peace with all. Jewish tradition is to aim for a quiet life, live in peace, not to get angry but encourage a thoughtful and meaningful existence and study God's Laws.

Colossians 1:9-14

Knowledge here is not just the possession of facts but knowledge and wisdom to do with Godly living, a life worthy and pleasing to the Lord. Light symbolizes holiness. By dying for us Jesus brings us into the kingdom of light, the opposite of the kingdom of darkness (Matthew 5:14) (1 John 5:3-5).

Questions:

How regularly are we in fellowship with Jesus?

How can we be sure that Jesus loves us?

How can we be encouraged by the disciples' doubts and lack of understanding?

How can we overcome when things go wrong, is this a normal part of Christian service?

How do we feel about the cost of serving Jesus?

3. Washing the Feet of Humanity

John 13:1-5, 12-17;
Colossians 1:11-14

- knowing the personal touch of Jesus (reminder)
- overflowing in servanthood
- Jesus sets us an example to follow
- becoming all things to all men (*cp.* Paul)
- Serving in the ordinary, practical and spiritual
- team work

John 13: 1-5, 12-17

In these passages Jesus emphasizes love. Jesus was completely in command of the situation of humble service although the disciples call him teacher and Lord. Jesus accepted both titles as being an instructor and also one who occupies the supreme place. He presides as the Father at the Passover meal, after washing their feet, He returns to his place reclining before the table. Servant, teacher and Lord of all. Jesus gave the instruction to the disciples (and us) to practice humble service and should be willing to perform the most menial tasks for one another. He makes a servile job into a picture of what he would do for them in the pain and suffering of the cross. He is *our* teacher and guide.

The servant is not above his master (Matthew 10:24-25). It is good for the servant to be like his master, and the student to be like his teacher, to be obedient and have a servant's heart. We declare our love by our obedience to Him and are to emulate what Jesus is like, therefore what God the Father is like with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 1: 11-14

Colossae used to be a leading city in Asia Minor (present day Turkey), several hundred years before Paul, which was on the great east-west trade route leading from Ephesus to the Euphrates River. By the first century AD it had been diminished to a second rate market town, surpassed by large, powerful neighbouring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. During Paul's ministry a man called Epaphras had been converted and had carried the gospel to Colossae.

Paul's letter was written to counteract the false teaching in the young church at Colossae which was under heretical attack. It is understood that beliefs, among others, included angel worship, reliance of human wisdom and tradition, secret knowledge (Gnosticism) and the depreciation of Christ. This is why Paul wrote to refute this heresy by reminding the church that Christ is the very image of God the Creator and sustainer of all things and the Head of the Church. Christ is described as "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Hebrews 1: 3).

Questions:

In John's Gospel, how much do you think the disciples understood while the events were taking place?

How are *we* in a better position to understand than the disciples as the events evolve?

In what ways can we be challenged to serve others in the low profile ordinary things? How can we keep ourselves grounded?

How can we feel part of the worldwide church?

As Christians how can we prevent ourselves being "contaminated" by our present culture of selfishness?

4 Encouragement for the Tough Times

John14:1-14; Colossians 1:15-23

- unsure of others
- unsure of themselves
- a troubled heart is not a sinful heart: Jesus knew about troubled hearts
- The Traveller's Rest of a Home in Eternity
- The Father's care on the journey
- Heaven's resources at hand

John 14: 1-14

The disciples had received bad news from their beloved Lord that was about to depart and they are troubled. Jesus gives them encouragement to trust in God and the promise of a permanent home. He gives them encouragement for the tough times ahead which he knows they will have to face.

They don't quite understand, especially Thomas who is honest enough to say so. In the early church Christianity was sometimes called "The Way" (Acts 9:2). Jesus *is* The Way, (to the Father) the truth and the life, who shows us what the Father is like (John 14: 7-11). They and we are destined for heaven where Jesus awaits us and we will see his Glory. There is also a reference to Jesus coming back in verse three, his second advent.

Philip wants to see the Father God but Jesus, in gentle rebuke, wants Philip to understand that to know Jesus *is* to know the Father. In verse seven Jesus stresses the intimate connection between the Father and Himself in that he brought a full revelation of the Father. Jesus' teaching was not of human origin but a connection between his words and his work. Jesus is one with the Father and the believer has access to God through their living union with Christ. He has promised to help the disciples when he goes to the Father for he will send the Holy Spirit who will help them (and us) bring about miracles in Jesus' name.

Colossians 1: 15-23

Christ is called the image of God described as the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being. Just as the firstborn son has certain privileges and rights in Biblical times, Christ has the rights in relation to all creation, priority and sovereignty. Christ is supreme over all thrones, powers, rulers and authorities and is the Head of the body, the Church. Christ was the Firstborn, the first to rise from the dead. Through Adam's sin the harmony between God and man was destroyed and disorder and chaos came into creation. In dying on the Cross Christ made peace and bridged the chasm between God and man and enabled us to enter fully into God's presence through faith.

Questions:

How would we describe the authority of Jesus?

How is it that the disciples did not fully understand who Jesus was, after three years fellowship?

When we have a "troubled heart" how do we tap into the promises we are given?

How can we give hope to a fractious and desperate world?

How can Jesus reconcile a broken world to God?

5 The promise of Jesus

John 14:15-31;
Colossians 1:24-29

The promised Spirit

- He is gentle and helps us
- He will be in you.
- He is teacher and guide
- obedience is the key

John 14: 15 -31

The Spirit of Truth will be sent to live in the believer, another Counselor or Helper. Counselor is a legal term but with a broader meaning than Counsel for the Defence. It refers to anyone who helped someone in trouble with the Law. The Spirit will always stand by and for the people of God.

Truth is the essence and action of the Spirit and He brings people to the truth of God. All three persons of the Trinity are linked with Truth. The Spirit was *with* Jesus' disciples and would be *in* them. This indwelling of the Spirit possibly indicates the Spirit coming at the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The life of the Christian always depends on the life of Christ. The Love of the Father cannot be separated from the that of the Son. Obedience is the key, the love language of heaven. Obedience to God in our lives is vital just as Jesus was obedient to the Father in his costly saving work for mankind.

Colossians 1: 24-29

By preaching to the Gentiles (those who are non-Jewish) Paul suffered all kinds of problems including imprisonment. He was suffering affliction because he was preaching the good news of Christ's atonement for sin to a lost world. The word of God is bought to completion, to its intended purpose, but only when it is proclaimed (Isaiah 55: 11). Paul's commission was to bring the Word to completion by being heard in Colossae and to so many, both Jew and Gentile, throughout his missionary journeys.

Questions:

How did the Holy Spirit sustain Paul?

How can the Spirit help us when we bring the Good News to others?

How much can we rely on the Spirit when things do not go according to plan, or fail?

How are we to enter into God's purposes for our lives?

Why is the world in general running after spiritual things but failing to acknowledge the saving work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit?

6 Staying Fruitful

John 15:1-17; Colossians 2:1-10

- abiding in Jesus
- pruning
- Seasons of Life
- obedience
- Season of Ministry *e.g.* Fresh Expressions, Veggie Boxes

'I AM' in John's Gospel is one of seven descriptions of Jesus in Greek. John (8:12, 9:5, 10:7, 10:11 & 14, 14:6, 15:1 & 5), echo Exodus 3:14, "I Am that I am", thus declaring the divine nature and oneness with the Father God. The vine is frequently used in the Old Testament as a symbol of Israel (Isaiah 5:7), Jesus however is the *true* vine.

The picture of pruning produces fruitfulness, makes the plant stronger and healthier followed by better fruit. Verse 6 possibly does not represent true believers, but genuine salvation is evidenced by a Godly life and character. A branch out of contact with the vine is lifeless and dies, therefore "I am

the vine” in verse 5 emphasizes again that a living union with Christ is essential. Knowing and believing in the teachings of Christ helps us to pray in the right way as His words and commands remain in us.

Obedience and love go together as seen in Christ’s sacrificial death. Jesus desires us to be joyful in doing our Master’s commands. He calls his disciples his friends, not uninformed servants, but revealed everything to them, as far as they were able to understand, of the Father’s plan. The Spirit would make things known in due course.

Normal practice in those days was to choose a Rabbi to be attached to, but in Jesus case *he* chose his disciples to bear fruit and so we bear fruit and the Father hears our prayers. Often we ask to be blessed or to be trained, but Jesus requires us to *obey*. This would be seen by our actions in love towards one another.

Colossians 2: 1-10

The letter from Paul was to be read out to the church in Laodicea about eleven miles from Colossae. Paul was concerned about heresy which emphasized knowledge as being the route to salvation. The believers intimate and living union with Christ is repeated in this letter. Paul wants them to understand that freedom is gained through Christ crucified, to be encouraged in heart and united in love. This was in contrast to the heretics which taught a combination faith in Christ, secret knowledge (Gnostic teaching) and physical practices.

Questions:

What do we think about pruning? How are we to view judgment e.g. the “thrown into the fire and burnt” verse (John 15:6)?

How can we know we are doing the Lord’s work?

How can we remain in Christ and obey his commands?

How can we encourage each other so that we remain part of and are sustained by the “vine”?

How are we to resist being “knocked off course” by latest trends or fashion?

7. The Spirit & Mission

John 16:5-16
Colossians 2:11-15

Jesus encourages his disciples and us (16:5-7)
God’s Spirit brings people to faith
God’s Spirit leads us in our spiritual journey

John 16: 5-16

None of the disciples really were brave enough to ask where Jesus was going after his announcement, but were filled with grief. They were concerned with what would happen to them after Jesus' departure. Jesus encourages them by speaking of the Holy Spirit to come but does not say why. His teaching to the disciples about His suffering and death on the Cross was necessary because until that happened the Spirit could not be sent (John 14:16).

Those who do not believe, do not see themselves as sinners, we know this by the attitude of those around us. The Spirit will convict the world but will reveal a righteous status before God to a believer. Salvation does not depend on good works as many believe today but belief in Christ's death on the Cross as Saviour. Jesus' ascension reiterates the act of redemption (meaning to pay the price), as he takes his rightful place at God the Father's right hand in heaven winning the Father's seal of approval.

Jesus speaks of the judgment and defeat of Satan not simply victory over him. Jesus Christ's teaching requires the Spirit's help therefore the disciples could not understand everything at that time. Verses 13-15 stresses the intimately close relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Colossians 2: 11- 15

In the Israelite/Jewish faith circumcision was a sign that the person stood in a full covenant relationship with God. The act would enable that person to enter fully into Jewish life and be called a son of Abraham. Circumcision was instigated by God to Abraham's heirs in Genesis 17: 10. Some see the passage in verse 13 implying that for the Christian, baptism is the parallel sign of the covenant relationship.

Questions:

How are we able to connect to a world that does not believe it has a sinful nature?

Why do "good works" seem to some to be the answer to what God wants for our lives?

How does Satan figure in our world today, what does the Bible mean about his 'judgment' and 'defeat'?

How are we to view the laws of circumcision in today's world?

How are we to see the Christian faith as part of Jewish history and promises?

8 Taking Up Your Cross

(week after Confirmation Service)

John 15:18-16:4; Colossians 2:16- 3:11
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- disciples will be unloved
- First and Twenty First Century experience
- to be expected: the world rejected Jesus
- why the world rejected Jesus

- how we can expect to be treated
- speaking up personally

John 15:18-16:4

The world opposes God's purposes, but the believer has new life with God and is therefore not the same as those who oppose the Father God, who is rejected in ignorance. At the time of Jesus on earth many saw the miracles, some believed and some didn't. The people at the time and the Jews in particular, had the great privilege of having received God's special revelation in the Old Testament and was expecting the Messiah to come. He was rejected by many, but not all. The early believers were Jews and indeed carried the "word" down the centuries to us today in the events of the Bible.

Persecution is inevitable when the world does not obey Jesus' teaching and believers must take up the Cross of Christ. The Jewish people being the most persecuted race on earth down the centuries would have been familiar with persecution. In time of Jesus the Jews lived under a harsh and brutal occupying Roman rule and most wanted a quiet life to carry on the ceremonies, festivals and symbols of their faith. They mostly achieved it so they did not want someone upsetting it all and questioning their views and attitude towards religion. The new believers claimed that Jesus was God on earth. The result was that the non-believing Jews claimed this was blasphemy.

Verse 25 reminds us that God's purpose is always accomplished despite the actions and belief of those who oppose it. The disciples bore their definitive testimony to Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit as they were unique in being taught by and witnessing to Jesus Christ's saving work and of his glory (Luke 24:48, Acts 10:39-41). We are to testify also as Jesus had commanded us to and bring people to faith relying on the Holy Spirit to move them to become part of the body of believers in God's family.

Colossians 2: 16- 3: 11

The Old Testament laws and ceremonies were symbols depicting the coming of Christ (Hebrews 8:5), therefore they failed to see that the fulfillment had already taken place in the coming of Jesus. The Colossians' heresy in these passages was a defective view of Christ in which he is believed to be less than deity, less than God. They carried the Old Testament laws to the extreme. There was a system of religious philosophy created by false teachers, and not of divine origin. In Verse 10 we are to put on a new "self" which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. We are to become a new creature, born again in the Spirit.

Questions:

How can we guard against being disconnected from the body of believers?

Why did some still not believe in Jesus even when they saw the miracles performed by him and would this happen today?

How could people miss great things because they are stuck in rules and regulations and did not see what was before them? Could this happen today?

How do we feel about persecution because of our faith and being treated badly (a reality in many parts of the world for Christians)?

How can we stay a faithful believer and spread the Good News when the world in general rejects Jesus Christ?

Prayer:

Lord God our Father, you taught us how to pray in faith, help us to be taken into your purposes and give us strength to do your will through Jesus Christ our Lord and in the Power of the Holy Spirit –
Amen